

I can still remember the very time that I saw Alan Arkush's brilliant film, ROCK 'N ROLL HIGH SCHOOL (1979). I was seventeen years old, and I experienced it for the first time at a friend's house who's father owned a large laser disc collection, and I fell deeply in love.

From that very first moment, I knew that the character of Riff Randell was for me. Not only was Riff the most beautiful girl I had ever seen, but she was everything I was, and more. She was on that next level. She was what I wanted to become. She loved music, it was everything to her, and she needed it to breathe. She was interested in self expression and rank individualism just like most teenagers of a certain pedigree, myself included.

She inspired me on so many levels, and if Riff Randell would've been in MY high school - she would've been my soul mate. Riff Randell was a self constrained wild child, a female Iggy Stooze. She was edgy, rebellious, and most of all - fun. Her wonderful sense of humor, and a "at all costs" passion to achieve her dream made it an easy choice to not allow anything to stand in her way. This is the very essence of American life. She is everyone's American Girl, and on many levels she is each and every one of us.

The talented character actress behind it all, is P.J. Soles. Pamela Jayne Soles [born Pamela Jayne Hardon] arrived on July 17th, 1950 in Frankfurt, Germany. With her father's job, insisting that the family spend so much time traveling, P.J. spent her entire adolescence growing up in and around Europe, occasionally returning to the United States for very brief periods of time only. Later, while on summer vacation in New York City with her college roommate, P.J. happened by the famed New York Actor's Studio. Since then, Soles has gone on to appear in some of the beloved movies of the '70s and '80s.

Appearing in such films as, HALLOWEEN (1978), CARRIE (1978), SOGGY BOTTOM U.S.A. (1981), STRIPES (1980), Soles has always brought a lovable girl next door quality to her work, regardless if she's sitting on a stove top or setting up a plan to humiliate a poor girl at a high school prom. With a important body of work behind her, Soles has remained for the most part a secret. Often, Soles is mentioned as a genre film actress only. However, she has amassed a body of film work, that's seen her participation is everything from comedy, horror, action, Sci-fi, to family films. She's an actress that's been severely under-used on all accounts, and it's time that someone did something about it.

Chatting with P.J. last month was so much fun. She's one of the funniest people I have ever met. She's intelligent, wickedly clever, insightful, and very down to earth. Not to mention timelessly beautiful. She's everything I knew she would be, and she's everything that I loved about the Riff Randell character so much from the start. Check It Out...

JUSTIN: One of the most interesting things I find about you, is how you grew up. How did your parents meet, and what are some of the places you've lived growing up?

PJ SOLES: Yeah, my dad was from Holland and my mother was from New Jersey.

Her first husband was killed in World War II in Germany, so she traveled to Germany to see the cemetery where he was buried. My dad, being Dutch was captured by the Nazi's and put into a camp. By the time my mother came to Germany, my dad had just been released from one of the work camps, and they ended up meeting each other on an Army base. Then my dad got a job with the insurance company called, A.I.U - American International Underwriters, they become A.I.G.

My dad spoke six languages, and they wanted to spread out all around the world, so we moved around as he traveled all over opening up branch offices. The first five years of my life, we lived in Germany. Then we moved to Morocco, which was very exotic and wonderful. Then we moved to Venezuela, to Maracaibo. I went to high school in Brussels, in Belgium. At that time, my dad really worked in Algeria, but he didn't want us to live there.

So by the time I was ready to go to college, my parents were moving to Istanbul. I was eighteen by then so I came to the states, cause I had never had the opportunity to live here, even though I had visited. Every time we'd leave each country we'd have to come back to the states for medical evaluations and get dozens of shots for the next country.

My college roommate was from Manhattan. We spent one summer at her mom's place in the city, and one day we wandered by the Actor's Studio. But even in all that traveling, I was always in plays. I was always interested in drama, but I never thought it something you could do for a living. In college I was a Russian language major, and I also speak French and Spanish.

It was a very nice upbringing. I always thought it was just normal. It's only now that I find it really interesting myself considering most people just grow up in one place.

JUSTIN: So P.J stands for Pamela Jayne. Were you named after anyone in your family's history?

PJ SOLES: No. The only thing my mother ever told me was that she had seen a movie where it was the name of a character. When I ask her what movie, she'd say that she couldn't remember. She did say though, that Jayne was spelled like Jayne Mansfield. I mean it's not a Dutch name. My dad was from Rotterdam, and all my cousins have these very Dutch names, so I guess I'm lucky I didn't get one of those names. My mom was from New Jersey, but to me, Pamela Jayne sounds southern.

JUSTIN: With your dad's history, growing up did he ever share any of his stories about being captured by the Nazi's?

PJ SOLES: Not really, not a lot. He was very tight lipped about it, just like a lot of people from that generation were. But whenever I would do my high pitched laugh, he would give me a very bad look. My mom would say that he didn't like that cause it reminded him of the screams he heard back in the camp. My dad loved Americans. George Patton was the one who actually opened up the gates to his work camp, and released the prisoners and captured the Nazis.

Patton was a huge hero to my dad. This wasn't a concentration camp, it was work

camp. My dad was helping the Jews escape from Holland. He was only nineteen years old. He was up in a attic hiding, and they stormed through my grandmother's house, and they took him right in front of his mother. They found out he had been helping people. He was in the camp for nine months, and when they were rescued he weighed less than 100 lbs. The Nazis were brutal to the Dutch people.

He did say that they tried to get the potato peels from the garage to eat, and he also told us about the sperm donors. They were offered freedom if they would be sperm donors, cause they were all gorgeous, the Aryan race with the blonde hair. He did say that anyone that volunteered never returned to the camp, so he doubted that they were ever given their freedom, after being sperm donors. So he never volunteered for that. That's really all he ever said about that time.

JUSTIN: So I wanted to see if you could confirm something. I wanted to know if you could share any memories about one of the very first projects you worked on, Joel M. Reed's BLOODBATH (1976)?

PJ SOLES: I don't know.. I don't remember it...laughing I don't know. I know it's on my IMDb. But I don't remember doing it. I wanna say I remember that I just screamed. Someone showed me a copy of it once. I was on a bed, and I screamed. I don't remember filming it, but it must have been done before I came to Los Angeles. So it must have been shot in New York. Like a half of days work or something, silly.

JUSTIN: How did you get involved with OUR WINNING SEASON (1978)?

PJ SOLES: I auditioned. There were a bunch of us going up to A.I.P cause they were making a bunch of teenage movies at the time. I went up and read for CALIFORNIA DREAMING (1979) with Robert Carradine. Joe Ruben was casting OUR WINNING SEASON and he saw me come out from reading for CALIFORNIA DREAMING and he asked me and Robert Carradine to read for OUR WINNING SEASON. I got cast but Robert didn't, and the next thing I knew I was on a plane going to Noonan, Georgia. It was a lot of fun.

JUSTIN: Next comes one of my favorite movies, BREAKING AWAY (1979). How did you get involved in the film?

PJ SOLES: By then I was married to Dennis Quaid. We met on OUR WINNING SEASON. So we had a rule that we'd never spend more than two weeks apart. I didn't have a job on BREAKING AWAY but I went along hoping to get the part of the french girl. I was about to do PRIVATE BENJAMIN (1980) by then, or had just done the film. I can't remember the timeline now, but I had bought this black whip. So I put on the whip, and went up to Peter Yates and starting talking to him in a french accent. He looked at me and said, 'Is that you, PJ?' I asked him for the part, but he told me that it had been cast earlier in the day, so they ended up putting me in as one of Hart Bochner's groupie's. His character - Rod, needed a little cheer leading squad. I just had that one line at the house.

JUSTIN: Weren't you guys all really close working on the film?

PJ SOLES: Yeah we all became instant friends, it was a wonderful shoot. Bloomington was great. We were there for three months. We'd go swimming in the quarries together. We used to call Dennis Christopher, Dennit. It was a blast, so much fun. We all lived at this Holiday Inn type hotel, and we'd all go to town to dinner every night. Peter Yates was this British professional. This was an "A" movie, and that was nice cause we all really were only used to doing these independent films.

Dennis and I went to see James Dean's grave, cause he was buried close by. In the same town we saw this advertisement for this old car for sale. Dennis loved old cars. My dad did too, so I said, 'sure' let's go see it. This little old lady owned this '54 Chevy that was yellow and green, that only had like three thousand miles on it. She had just driven it to church, her husband had passed away. She wouldn't sell it to us, cause we were from Los Angeles. She said that she didn't want her Cream-Puff out on the freeway. But finally we convinced her. Also, right before we left for Los Angeles we got a little basset hound puppy there in the same town that we named, "Bluebonnet". We drove this car and the dog back from Bloomington to Los Angeles, and we stopped off in Montana, and decided that we'd build a house there.

Later we did come back to Bloomington for the film's premiere and we got a limo and stopped and picked up the lady who sold us the car, and took her to the premiere with us. We put a license plate on the car that read, "Cream-Puff." We took pictures of the car in front of our house in Los Angeles and sent them to her. She was lovely, we stayed in touch, and over the years we'd send each other Christmas cards.

JUSTIN: How was Peter Yates as a director?

PJ SOLES: I remember Peter having a 50/50 relationship with the D.P. for sure. He discussed everything with him, and they really took their time getting some really carefully planned out shots. He was always in a huddle with the guys, they were planning out what they're characters were gonna do. Such a great cast, Danny Stern, Jackie Haley - the Moocher. Those guys really bonded. It was a cool movie.

JUSTIN: One thing I really love about you is how casual and open you are about a lot of personal aspects of your life. Is that just an trait of your personality that allows you to do that?

PJ SOLES: Yeah, I don't know. I believe that everything happens for a reason and a purpose. The biggest thing for me is that after Dennis and I got divorced I got re-married to Skip Holm. We met, he was test pilot, on the location for THE RIGHT STUFF (1983).. We had two kids together. Had Dennis and I stayed together we might have had kids. Things happen for a reason. I really loved Dennis, I still love him. This is all documented. Back then there wasn't really any sort of intervention. It was Hollywood, drugs were rampant. I just couldn't deal with that, I didn't know how to deal with that type of stuff. It was an exciting time too. We were both just starting out, and we were coming home at the end of day, telling each other about parts that we had read for, that we hoped we would get.

The weirdest thing is that I live in a suburb of Los Angeles now, and when I go to my

local grocery store, I've got a whole grocery cart of stuff, and I'm in the checkout and I notice one of the rags, and I see Dennis on there, and in my head I'm thinking, 'geez, there's my past life...' It's very strange.

JUSTIN: The obvious question about ROCK 'N ROLL HIGH SCHOOL...Do you still have your jacket from the film? If so, how much can I buy it off of you for?

PJ SOLES: Yes, I still do have the jacket, with the musical notes. What size are you?...laughing... It's really small.

JUSTIN: I would be like Chris Farley in TOMMY BOY (1994) and be the "fat guy in a little coat". I know you supplied your own wardrobe for the film? Was that something you owned prior to shooting?

PJ SOLES: laughing...you know I actually had to wrestle Rod Stewart for that jacket! I found that jacket at Fred Segal's in Los Angeles. It was two hundred dollars. It was outrageous. I had put it on hold. I went down to pick it up, cause I realized how critical it was for the character. Rod Stewart was there in the store. He saw it, and said, 'I want that.' I tried explaining to him, "please, no..no..I need this jacket for a movie. I'm doing a character" Then he said, "I want it..I've give you double!" So, I said, "please, look - let me wear it for the movie, and you can have it." Then he laughed and said, " You can take it, you can just take the bloody thing..." It was kinda funny.

My daughter wore it for Halloween when she was twelve. She wore the striped leggings too. It looked really big on her. I've worn it since the film too. They asked me to wear it in a Donna's music video. It didn't fit as good as it used too. So I told them to shoot me from the chest up...laughing

JUSTIN: That jacket should be in a museum, no?

PJ SOLES: laughing...Maybe if they ever make a wax figure for Madame Tussauds of Riff, I'll let them use it

JUSTIN: How was working with Alan Arkush on ROCK 'N ROLL HIGH SCHOOL?

PJ SOLES: The thing about filming ROCK 'N ROLL HIGH SCHOOL was that we only had twenty-one days. The same amount of time we had when I worked with John Carpenter on HALLOWEEN.

HALLOWEEN was a little more relaxed. On ROCK 'N ROLL HIGH SCHOOL it was stressful, but a lot of fun. Poor Alan, he was used to cutting trailers for Roger Corman. So we had limited time, and limited budget. Stressful but fun again. If you could get it on the first take it was like, "Thank You."

JUSTIN: Working on the film, off camera did you spend any time with Paul Bartel and Mary Woronov?

PJ SOLES: Not a whole lot, I think I spent some time with them at lunch. They were very funny people and very sweet. I don't think that Paul ever really understood

that I could be a cool chick. I'm not sure what he thought about me. I think he thought I was very 'white bread.' I can appear sometimes like that I think, but I'm not, at all. We would've had a good time. He should've had a hint by the time we had our scene together in the film, right after I destroyed the files, and we're dancing and I'm taking off his clothes...laughing

JUSTIN: Did Arkush allow you the opportunity to improve anything?

PJ SOLES: Yes. In those days anything was welcome. In that scene in my bedroom with Dey Young where Tom calls up on the phone to ask for a date. After we hung up, all that was improv.

JUSTIN: Do you have a favorite line from the film?

PJ SOLES: Yes, but they aren't my lines. I love when Mary says, "Do your parent's know your Ramones?" Also, I love when Dick Miller says, "Those are ugly, ugly people.." That's just so funny...

JUSTIN: In the '90s you teamed back up with Allan Arkush. Dey Young, Mary Woronov, and yourself had cameo's for Arkush's T.V movie, which is really enjoyable, SHAKE, RATTLE and ROCK (1996). Was that cool to work with them again?

PJ SOLES: Yeah, it was great. The best part about being there was seeing Renee Zellweger walking around the set with her dog, barefoot, eating cottage cheese. Then five minutes later, she's in costume, in make-up and singing and dancing. She was the star. She was just so relaxed, so natural. It was fun being there for the day, and it was fun to play Mahjong with Mary. It was cute of Alan Arkush to get us together again for that.

JUSTIN: Singing for the soundtrack for ROCK 'N ROLL HIGH SCHOOL, did you have any concerns that you wouldn't be able to pull something off like that?

PJ SOLES: In my '20s I was married to musician Steven Soles, when I lived in New York. We were always singing and recording demos. I had done some singing in television commercials. So I was totally comfortable doing it, and it was fun. I'm still writing lyrics to this day. My daughter's the singer in the family now.

JUSTIN: What do you think makes the Riff Randell character so encompassing? Why is she so timeless?

PJ SOLES: She is just an energetic, fun, spunky kind of girl. She's not a slut, she's not a tramp. She's a fashionista. She's really cool. She's got energy, and she loves this crazy rock band, it's a punk band. It's just so bizarre that she was just so enamored with them. She wasn't a groupie, she wanted to write songs with them. She was a cool chick. She was sexy and wore hot clothes. She was hot, but also very fun to be around. She was very imaginative. An all around fun girl.

JUSTIN: Do you have an update on the remake or re-imagining of ROCK 'N ROLL HIGH SCHOOL that's said to be in the works. I've heard that Alex Winter will be

doing it?

PJ SOLES: I don't know. It's one thing to take something and re-imagine it or re-fashion it. That's cool. But, what can you do with something like ROCK 'N ROLL HIGH SCHOOL? It was a film of it's time, but it's timeless. You can put it on now - it's quirky, zany and mad-cap. It's in a category all it's own. Riff's wardrobe is still cool today. I don't know how you could re-make it. You can't blow up a school now. It can't feature a weird band, cause there are so many weird bands now. So you can't use that angle. What would the premise be? Where are they gonna find people like Paul Bartel and Mary Woronov? It won't be that way now. Parents are so proactive today. If your kid comes home and says 'my principal was mean to me today.' Those parents are gonna be right in your face. So, I don't know what you could do?

Ten years ago, we had an idea. Riff Randell became a jingle writer, and she's upset cause she spent twenty years writing jingles. So she decides to try to get the Ramones back together. She get's in a van with her kids and drives around the country to see the Ramones who are spread out in different states. She gets them back together, and they play a concert at her daughter's high school, and we bring back all the characters.

Kinda like ROCK 'N ROLL HIGH SCHOOL revisited? But now we're all SO much older, I don't know how interesting that would be?

JUSTIN: OK, so for the sake of it, if they actually did make it again, who would you want to fill your shoes?

PJ SOLES: God, that's like asking me what my favorite album is...laughing

JUSTIN: You're supposed to say, "NO ONE!"...laughing

PJ SOLES: Well, I don't know...I think that girl from AN EDUCATION (2009) Carey Mulligan is pretty good. She has a good American accent, and kinda has that quality. But I guess it would be good to have an real American I suppose.

JUSTIN: So you have thought about it then?

PJ SOLES: Well, you're making me think about it...laughing Oh! Kim Kardashian...Laughing. Howard Stern would love it..laughing Directed By Rob Zombie. Let's Do it!...laughing

JUSTIN: You mention Rob Zombie, and we're talking about re-imagining films. So, do you think his HALLOWEEN films deserve the nasty feedback they've gotten by the fans of the original? It seems really overly harsh, no?

PJ SOLES: Well, it's fifty fifty. The people that like the films are true original HALLOWEEN fans. When I go to these conventions, people always ask me what I thought of it. I really liked it. I love Rob. I love Sherry. They are wonderful people, they have this amazing romance and marriage. There are people that love his take on it, and then there are others that hate the fact that he went into the psychology

of it. He took it to the modern age, he used the modern techniques. So, yeah totally.

JUSTIN: How did you get cast as "Sharlene" in SOGGY BOTTOM U.S.A.?

PJ SOLES: I loved working on SOGGY BOTTOM! It was awesome. I just went and auditioned. I brought my guitar, cause they said she was a 1930's singer and songwriter, and I played a couple songs. The director loved me. The next thing I knew we're down there in Marshall, Texas. We flew into Shreveport, Louisiana. I think it was thirty miles from the set. We were there for three months. It was so much fun. Don Johnson and I went into a studio down there and recorded some songs that the producers son had written that they ended up using in the movie. So great, such a great cast. Don Johnson, Ben Johnson, Jack Elam, Lane Smith, Lois Nettleton. It was so great. We built that whole town, and after we were done Walter Hill came in and shot SOUTHERN COMFORT (1981) there with Keith Carradine. I worked with him on THE LONG RIDERS (1980). I was a hooker, but I was cut out of the film.

JUSTIN: So would you consider yourself a sex symbol back in the 70's?

PJ SOLES: When I hear the term "sex symbol" I think of someone like Pamela Anderson, or Kim Kardashian. Those are very sexy and busty women, I wasn't certainly busty, I was playful. I may have been flirtatious. I may have been considered sexy, but I don't personally think of myself that way. Was I attractive enough to be able to work in movies, be a model, work in television commercials, I appreciate that, yes. But I've always thought of myself as being intelligent. That probably comes from my upbringing. I wanted to be a Russian interpreter at the U.N. when I was younger. I was playful in all my movies, I was topless in some of the movies, but am I a sex symbol? I don't really think that I am.

JUSTIN: I read an interview with you once that you gave around the time that the latest special edition of STRIPES came out on DVD. You said that you were happy that your son was graduating from The Merchant Marine Academy at that point, cause you didn't want him to suffer his friend's seeing your scenes in the film, and giving him a rough time. So my question is, what's it like to be a "Milf"?

PJ SOLES: laughing...They all did see it! They gave him a lot of talk about it. My son, Sky, is a captain of a Coast Guard Cutter. He's became a captain at twenty-five, but now he's twenty-seven. A lot of the guys he's with now have seen it too...laughing I went down to see him, and I took some photos from the film and I signed a bunch of them. I took some pictures with the crew. It makes him a very popular Captain in the Coast Guard...laughing

He came and hung out with me when I did this convention in his area last year. I did it with John Carpenter. So, he got a chance to spend some time talking with John. He came and saw these lines of all this people, and he said, "Oh My God, they really like you!" I tried telling him, "Look, I'm not just your mother!"...laughing

JUSTIN: I was wondering if you could talk a little about your participation in the 1987 film, SAIGON COMMANDOS (1988)?

PJ SOLES: Oh Yeah...That was a way way independent very cheap movie that we shot in the Philippines. When your choosing a project, they always say the script, the location, the other actors, the director, you've gotta pick one of those, you can't have all three. I liked the director, I liked the actors in it. We had a really great time. The movie didn't turn out so good. I remember going to a rough cut or a screening or something and remember thinking it was just "OK." It would probably be something you'd put on television or put out on DVD. It was fun.

I played a journalist. We shot it at like three in the morning in the streets of Manila and out in the country. The locations were fantastic. I remember I had a massage every night there, by this little old lady. She was probably like in her '40s, but she looked like she was in her '60s. It was twelve dollars for an hour massage, and then you'd go to sleep. I loved that country..laughing

JUSTIN: You did what I think is a very under-rated horror film a few years ago, Bill Lustig's UNCLE SAM (1997). Such a great idea, great Larry Cohen script, how did you get involved?

PJ SOLES: Yeah, it didn't get seen a lot. But everyone that's seen it, liked it. I think my agent got a call, and I really liked Bill. So I agreed to do it. We had a nice rapport. He was a fan of all my movies. It was a good premise, it just wasn't a gangbuster of a film.

JUSTIN: Do you ever worry that you'll be typed cast as a horror actress?

PJ SOLES: Well, I think people think of me more as a comedy actress. Certainly, I've done a lot of horror conventions. There aren't any comedy conventions I don't think. I've been lucky to have been in a few films that have gotten a lot of notoriety. I don't feel like I've been in just one genre of movie in my career. I did STRIPES, THE DEVIL'S REJECTS (2005), CARRIE, and ROCK 'N ROLL HIGH SCHOOL. So when I go to these conventions, guys come up and we talk about THE DEVIL'S REJECTS, and then they bring their dads and they want to talk about STRIPES.

I wish I could have gone further of course. But by the time I had re-married for a third time, I had two young children. Back in the early '80s, agents would tell you, 'don't tell them that you have kids!' Now it's different, People Magazine features actors and actresses with their children. Then, if you had to go on location that's something very difficult if you have a six month child at home. So that's the one thing I wish I could have maybe done better, figure out how to juggle kids and career.

JUSTIN: What about LITTLE BIGFOOT (1997)?

PJ SOLES: laughing....I had a good time making that. I liked the director. I was hoping to be in something else with him. He was a cool guy. We shot that up in Big Bear, and I had my own cabin, and I took my daughter with me. The little girl in the movie that plays my daughter was the same age as my own daughter, so they got to play together. It was great.

JUSTIN: So how many posters for LITTLE BIGFOOT have you signed at these conventions?

PJ SOLES: laughing....None!

JUSTIN: How has Hollywood treated you over the last 10 years? Is it more difficult now than say it would have been 10 years ago, for you to get cast on something?

PJ SOLES: Maybe like five years ago I pushed a little harder than I am now. I get offered horror movies all the time, and everyone says the same thing, "we don't have much money, so will you do the film for less money.." Even working on THE DEVIL'S REJECTS that was SAG, and I only got scale for the day. But it was Rob Zombie, and I had to audition three times. I couldn't believe it. To get that I actually brought in an autographed photo that I made out to Rob that said, "Rob, I'm ready to scream for you again, Love, PJ." and asked that they give it to him. I was cast the next day. Rob's so great. He's been so nice to me, telling people in the press that I'm his favorite 70's cult actress. Because of that role, that's allowed me to go to all these conventions and sign thousands of posters.

JUSTIN: What's one thing you never get asked about, but wish you would get asked about in an interview?

PJ SOLES: Well, I really appreciate it when I get asked about growing up in other countries. I've starting writing my autobiography, I'm the one that's lived my life, and my life started in all these other countries before I started acting. To me, that seems like my life. Your childhood is so significant and so important, and my parents and their beginnings is very overwhelming. Especially with my parents gone now, I really see the perspective on things. I'm a parent. There is more to life than just being in these cool movies. It's much bigger than that. But acting became a big part of my life too. So I wish I'd get asked more about that. What else?....What size shoe do I wear? Nine...laughing

JUSTIN: What's your favorite swear word?

PJ SOLES: To use or to hear?

JUSTIN: Hear.

PJ SOLES: The F word, you can't get better than that. It's a great word...laughing